

You Can't Scent Me
and
Other Selected Poems

**You Can't Scent Me
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Other Selected Poems**

Ram Krishna Singh



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IMAGINARY GAINS

The traps hidden in the candle flame
are the cages we make and unmake
to chart the future and yet fear
the emergency light at night
dream the concerns of slinky colleagues
and how to police their freedom
against owls, monkeys and bandicoots
that howl at each move to the lee
and yet pretend our poses intact
through several byways reach victory stand
breath by breath conspire against ourselves
only to hear the echoes that rise
or die down in silence the twangs
of memory reveal the pit
dug over the years or the earth
fermented with imaginary gains



I DON'T KNOW...

I don't know how to negotiate the long steep trail
with hidden scorpions under loose rocks
at home with human muck in a valley existence
strolling upward through a thicket of TV images
politics of glory, garbage and god
the odd arts of money, hierarchy and control
nobody knows who unmakes whom

I don't know how to follow the ridges
back to the trail and the dead river
but stand for a moment to rub the sand from my feet
before worrying about the lost vitality and fear
of the approaching night and rising smoke
dissolving in the sky or conspiring with elements
hardly in balance but contorting the psyche

I don't know what is there for me to hope
when the rains rejuvenate and flood both
the repulsive stench and the loss of pathways
linger longer than the flavour of the first drops
under the tree the puddle feeds no sparrows
but algae that couldn't dry now trap tiny souls
that fail to swell with heaven's breath



TIME TO BREAK OFF

How long can I grow without roots
or make way for what is approaching
in digital noises I can't be
inheritor of arrant cowards
smelling the arse on their fingers

nor can I be the priest checking
the burnt tongues to test criminals
stiff with cold I'm tired of animal
struggle for survival and last rites
in candle light digging cursed
treasure for night songs others croon

I can't decipher names in smoke
nor forget the faces emerging
from the matrix of tremors
that are islands to shackle
feet in silence close the cycle
of waters that feed the sea

I feel lumps hinder and pain
now it's time to break off and bury
the ash in the earth and plant afresh
foliage for rains or sun to nurse
a destiny I could take pride in



WE HARBOUR HISTORIES

The falsity of the sky is more real than the earth's
lies can't sustain hope of divinity

we have complicated with poesy
private hells to mitigate flow of time

that couldn't carve heaven: we harbour histories
of broken promises and fallen gods

lament men and women buried in light
now soulless, bodiless, traceless we look

upward and whittle continents from clouds
hanging generations that may never be



EXPOSÉ

Created in self
listening to the book
evolving me
in degeneration
indistinct and delusive

memory bank
reigning my action
orgasmic illusion
I keep recycling
cocooned exposition



HOW SILLY

You're my love tonight
you know me as you know
your body

will you bother to say hello tomorrow
if we meet in the street
alone like this?

just as I like your frisette
you like my male smell
you say.will you clutch
my hands like this tomorrow
if I meet and say I'm hungry?

how silly, darling, go & wash
your mouth smells pubic hair



LET'S MEET

Before the bananas ripe
let's meet at least once

lest the fog dampen passion
let's water our love

the sun is bright this morning
and night's promising

let's meet and unfreeze winter
of years, drink some wine

restore warmth of faith and hope
and heal the breaches

without black goggles for seeing
let's meet at least once



DYING SUN

How does it matter
I remember or forget
the nights or lights
that stand still

in the dense fog
nothing visible
nor audible

the thundering planes
touch the ground:

it's all game
of guess and vague
everyone

everything
even the tick
of the clock

this freezing hour
redolent of
crumbling echoes

I can't divine vision
or loom up certainty
to mock follies
of dying sun



SHADOW

Last evening
I saw a flower bloom
today it's faded

but my fear
lurking like a shadow
ever present

I can't erase:
emptying the mind
easier said than done



POETIC DISTURBANCE

There's more to view in a dew drop
than what lies in my backyard
—years of muck and mucking about—
burial too difficult

in sunlight images shine
like crystal ball reveal my mind
in poetic disturbance
leaking lust and blood on dried grass



IT DOESN'T RAIN

It's lightning
every evening
in the sky
but it doesn't rain

I keep postponing
my journey

whether the train is late
or I miss it
it doesn't matter

I look below
the chasm is wide
like the lightning
but it doesn't rain



ALLERGIES

The barber sees
a potential customer
in me but I pass

the tense faces
after the long walk sunshine
a fag in the car

short carnival:
neatly hide faded vests drying
in the balcony

helter skelter
afternoon windy rain
allergies again



WHO CARES?

Death hides in the body
but who sees? it's obscure

living on the edge
seeking space into swamp

they all talk about the sun
swelling in the sky

and close eyes to the spider
spinning waves on the ceiling

all alone, but who cares?
suspicion and distance

like lovers they pretend
to leave, yet stay longer

dishing out luxuries
showing off generosity

on the heart's fancy table
waiting to welcome the guest



MERKABA

They say my birth was a heavenly event:
here I am suffering third-rate villains
that erect walls to stop the chariots
from Merkaba: the angels fume but who cares
heaven is a mirage in human zoo



NEW YEAR

The dates on calendar question
all my undone acts

and memories that haunt or fade
in nightly nakedness

stumbling toward the next day's sun
without celebration

at 63 January jeers
my degenerating sex

a still itch: mantra and mirror
quiet god and drying petals



GLEAM OF LIGHT

Late August:
clouded midnight, sneezing
restless in bed

all negative vibes
well up the mind

jackals yell outside
I read Hsu Chicheng
for a gleam of light



AVALANCHE

Time's wrinkling fingers
trivialize the sun and snow
in a crooked land

I see history crippled
with midnight dyspnoea
the green umbrella

hosts disaster:
the avalanche waits on its shoulder
the wound opens



I CAN LIVE

I've outlived
the winter's allergies
and depressing rains
in a human zoo

I can live
my retirement too
without pension and medicare:

the wheelchair doesn't frighten
I can live

uncared and unknown
survive broken home
the numbness of the arms
the pain in the neck

and inflation too



HERESY

My shrinking body
even if I donate
what's there for research:

devil in the spine
abusing tongue in sleep
or bleeding anus

defy all prayers
on bed or in temple—
the same heresy

oozing and stinking
onanist excursion
dead or alive



CLAY DREAMS

They make my face
ugly in my own sight

what shall I see in the mirror?

there is no beauty
or holiness left
in the naked nation:

the streams flow dark
and the hinges of doors moan
politics of corruption

I weep for its names
and the faces they deface
with clay dreams



SANGAM

The crack in the sky
is not the rosy cleavage
to rape the body

nor is the beast any free
to escape the bloody river
that reflects stony wrath
in doggy position

they all expect their reward
for burying the noise
of sunny free wheeling
in frozen passion

turn beggars they all
search warmth with ash-smeared sadhus
at road side tea stall
whistle and wash off sins

in sangam muddled
with privileged few soar high
but I'm glad I crawl on earth
my roots don't wave in the air



QUAIL DREAMS

I've lived 23,000 days
awaiting a day that could become
god's day in eden earth or within

or even my grandson's smile
on his first day in mother's arms

now I sit an empty boat
on a still river
and shake with quail dreams



RETURN TO WHOLENESS

The body is precious
a vehicle for awakening
treat it with care, said Buddha

I love its stillness
beauty and sanctity
here and now

sink into its calm
to hear the whispers in all
its ebbs and flows

erect, penetrate
the edge of life and loss
return to wholeness



NONE TALK

Flowers don't bloom
in tribute to
builders' apathy

the trees are dying:
they too know they'll be felled
or the heat will kill

the concrete rises
calamity too will rise
none talk the ruins they bring



STRANGER

I don't know where I lived
in my former existence
but the hell I've breathed
for three decades here
couldn't adapt my soul:
I remain a stranger
to them and to the cold walls
that put out the candle lights
in my roofless house



INDIFFERENCE?

Being good
couldn't make me know
any better

I was harmless
they sold my name
and became
what I couldn't

in the middle of day light
I vanished like faces
from voters' list

with no difference
to who wins
or who loses



I TOO DESCEND

Some fresh bones, and designer dress
distorted hopes, cataract vision
hardly any better the face of the body

and if there is a soul, the soul hears

the map guides the mind's midnight
but the destination is different

deception is courage

they know the end of journey
and get down when the train stops

I too descend



DRIED VISION

Teary eyes
with sparks and lightning
dried vision

caged existence
seek deliverance
muttering old prayers



SEASON'S PRICK

Unpruned roses
and unknown grasses
make me aware
of the emptiness
the dusk in her room sounds

she searches out
her shadow in
the rising moon

I feel the season's prick



DEGENERATION

When gods are out to teach me a lesson
where to go to pray or find relief?

my prophet friends predict each day good
and the future fulfilling, the palmists find
the sun, saturn, venus, and rahu hostile:

they seek money for rituals, stones or mantras
while God gives us the best in life gratis

I can't change man or nature, nor the karmas
now or tomorrow they all delude
in the maze of expediency and curse
stars, fate, destiny, or life before and after
degenerating the mind, body, thought, and divine



CRACKS

The cracks on the parapet
have widened for the peepal
to stay green for once
rains too want us to drench
our heads and feel one
with cool wind
in a dark corner
shed fears and enjoy love



BUGGING

Each night a challenge:
suffocative restlessness
sleepless spirits' noise
sexual starvation
anal menstruation
dingy subconscious

conspire behind closed eyes
absent healing and
wishful miracles

a clueless sun rises
bugging time and life



NEIGHBOUR

With scheming mind
and crafty heart
loud and rebellious
a professional loser
perfumes the room
with flattering lips
and strays a preacher
to revolution



VACATION

Because I had no STD code to dial Heaven
I walked into Hell measuring happiness
in buried lines on the palms and shrinking head:
I couldn't know when love sieved and sank
like a ship on vacation



SECRET

When I asked
to open her secret
she showed me thumb

I thought
she would return
love for love



LEMONS IN COURTYARD

She props the stooping lemons
with stake but avoids
bending close to me:

I die to draw the blossom
in my twining arms
but she likes the other scent



TRANSITION

Coming out of the room
they smile to think they're not
what they were before
nor would they ever be
the same again even if
they wanted to be



YOU CAN'T SCENT ME

In the poems I write
you can read my mind
even know when I'm blue

before the mirror
when I stand in the dark
you can't scent me

nor will words comfort
in chilly December
when alone in candle light

empty coffee cups
deride the syllables
I spin to make haiku

my hairs in air
reveal the baldness:
wank without wad



SECRET OF WAKING

Standing at the edge
I long to float with waves and
wave with instant wind
on the dream water's breast
I read tomorrow's wonder:
the secret of waking



I TALK TO MYSELF IN BED

After a day's labor
they lie on a sand pile
in the basement of
a new shopping complex
rising slowly next door
like the waves at Nellore beach
that broke before wiping
my name on the sand

I take a snap at sunset:
they play with plastic bottles in water
or eat fried fish in the huts

I'm warned against placing it on Facebook
she hates my face

nor am I allowed to speak
to the drug addict picked up
from the door steps of
Varsha Apartments

his father questions
if there's law in the country
only a street dog wags its tail

I wheeze and take a seroflo puff
and wonder if I should visit
NIMHANS and get checked
to manage my sleep

she questions why I think of Bangalore
for treatment of all my ailments
and takes me to Bannerghatta zoo
for animal viewing



JOURNEY

All around
snoring men and women
in an infected coach

allergies multiply
restive long hours

now too much
to bear the loneliness
of train journey



AFTER THE ACT

They practice death
in school and blame India:
terrorist politics

no wake-up call
be it Nawaz or Modi
power luxury

in angel costume
each invokes divine
condemnation

after the act
ritual truth burial
and peace politics



SHADE IN DREAM

I thought I would hold her
in my arms before falling
and kiss her on the table
or under the tree
but she never let me:
she reached up coolly
leaving me a shade in dream



EDICT

After the death of Jesus
I ceased to be a sinner:
God's come closer with His love

my flame glows with passion
and dreams rise in new shapes
I love the spirit's edict



JAGGED EDGES

Too stifling
inside the boat
outside
waves of hopelessness
in unending sea

noah's ark is no home
nor an island
promise of eden

it's only dead dreams
floating or flying
for a short break

I too would end
repeating the same myth
on whirling jagged edges



BODY: A BLISS

To see you naked
is to recall the Earth
says Garcia Lorca

it's no sin to love
strip naked in bed, kitchen
or prayer room

the bodies don't shine
all the time nor passion
wildly overflows

but when we have time
we must remember parts
arouse dead flesh

rub raw with desire
peeling wet layers through light
sound, senses and taste

play the seasons:
the thirst is ever new
and blissful too

to recreate
the body, a temple
and a prayer



RED LIGHT

Hurrying at red light
is no exception
be it traffic or sex
movement is the essence
and time matters



MISTY DARKNESS

Sleepy roads
with or without light
tear the sky

I watch the murmur
in the misty darkness
Tao of midnight



ALOOF

Unlinked to the tree
he doesn't know his family—
stands aloof, questions

ancestors don't change
the mood of the weather:
the leaf needs his name



FRESHNESS

The withered leaves
blown in autumn
come again with the tired rains

the season confers
through the soft grey clouds
the growing freshness on naked trees



ROOF

On the roof top
she waits for her man with
moon cake and lantern:
a flash of silver showers
on the mist-shrouded figure



FORTIS

So many patients
so many diseases
masked faced
in Fortis I inhale
microbes in AC lounge



PAIN

Tears dry up
leaving no marks where her pain
ends and mine begins
on the face make up damps
with aching sweat and cold sighs



LEECHES

At the end of the day
when I look back and see
my knowledge and insight
rusting with ageing colleagues
I pity my age and wish
to give up; I can't change
the means and ends frustrate
the will to work any more

I want to rest now burying
ambience and achievements
that ache the soul and make
empty sounds in the hollow
of a hallowed pond long doomed
for marrying self-indulgent
elites and idiots
sucking generations



WITHOUT SLEEP

Anxieties don't end
with age fire raging to quench
drugs hardly help reach
climax any more and
ecstasy a far cry

without sleep
through dried roses to nightmares
I smell hell all day
suffer shrinking passions
in the hollow of my mind



PROFESSOR

A professor
not worried so much—
shrinking genius
at his table views nudes
reviews failed erections



BEWARE

Professors beware
intellectual success
lies in inventing
lies to conceal common truths
and sound holier-than-thou



TEA BREAK

With mordant comments
he tries to geld a standpat
in a feminists' meet
and turns a sook
at tea break



PIQUED

Going along Boring Canal
he is piqued to waste a sin
over smuggled evening
in the capital's
canal culture



FILTH

The chains multiply
wrap life in the skin of water
crying quits to an acomous sky:
the mute soul suffers
the oozing filth



TATTOO

A serpent twists
it's head to face a dragon
on her shoulder:
their tails on breast in water
swirl to cleanse my kiss on skin



SMILE

Her smile
with the whiff of sandal
makes love livelier:
I search Tao
in the wind's flavour



NEST

Peeping through the fog
the sun feebly comforts
a sparrow's nest
built under the window sill:
I hear a new-born crying



MY FACE

My face
locked in her hands
I can't look—
love's changing shapes
a bird in cage



CHERRY

A mist covers
the valley of her body
leaves memories
like the shiver of cherry
in dreamy January



BREATH

I love her undress
the light with eyes that spring
passion with kisses
she leaves her name again
for my breath to pass through



AT SEA

Awaiting the wave
that'll wash away empty hours
and endless longing
in this dead silence at sea
I pull down chunks of sky



TEMPLE

Scratching his groin
a worshipper offers food:
the flattered deity
in flowery garbage, holy
water, incense, and sweat



COLOUR

In perfect accent
they discuss finance and
foam with colour
at the dining table
smell stale beer



LIPSTICK

A happier image
with salubrious top
turns rapturous
as she tamps her love
with watery lipstick



REALIZATION

Men or women
no living gods:

the soul has no sex

the form, the body
and the name unreal

the climax of eternity
denudes the mind



FRESH FUTURE

Where will we reach
sailing in a coffin

or dreaming to anchor
off the rainbow arch

the gold and purple ashes
won't revive the phoenixes

lost in myths and stories:
we need to recoup

the elements' balance
and create new suns

and moons that could light the cave
and begin a fresh future



LET MY COUNTRY NOT SINK

Where education leads to submissiveness, not self-respect
where knowledge and acceptance depends on certificates
where push-out is called drop-out

Where repression breeds fear, powerlessness, alienation and
marginalization
where dependency, not self-sufficiency, perpetuates with
helplessness
where discontentment is the way of life and dignity is decried

Where the system blames the victims to preserve status quo
and the stream of reason is lost in narrow divisions

Into that ever-widening hell of majority and minority
O my God,
let my country not sink in the new century



SEXLESS SOLITUDE

I don't seek the stone bowl
Buddha used while here:
she dwells on moon beams

I see her smiling
with wind chiseled breast
in sexless solitude

her light is not priced
but gifted to enlighten
the silver-linings



LOVE

(A Tanka Sequence)

His message to meet
at moonrise among flowers
sparkles a secret
on her smiling face passion
glows with charming fervor

she is no moon yet
she drifts like the moon, takes care
of him from the sky—
meets him for a short, waxing
leaves him for a long, waning

before going to bed
she looks too sad to have
any sweet dream:
the lonely lamp glints no love
and no star peeks through the curtains

yearning to meet him
she turns a silk-worm spinning
love-silk in cold night—
stands in a shade melting tears
like a candle, drop by drop

stains on dried dewy
tears on the eyelids tell of
the load on her mind:
clothed in spring the willow twigs
reveal the changed relation

locked in the shadows
of unrolled curtains her love
in the lone boudoir:
she plays tunes on the violin
flowers fade at the windows

she senses all things
changing as she passes through
the city again:
should I leave the old house or
lie in the grave before death



SPIRITUAL FLICKERS

(A Tanka Sequence)

Plodding away at
season's conspiracies
life has proved untrue
with God an empty word
and prayers helpless cries

I wish I could live
nature's rhythm free from
bondage of clock-time
rituals of work and sleep
expanding haiku present
on the prayer mat
the hands raised in vajrasan
couldn't contact God—
the prayer was too long and
the winter night still longer
the mind creates
withdrawn to its own pleasures
a green thought
behind the banyan tree
behind the flickering lust

I can't know her
from the body, skin or curve:
the perfume cheats
like the sacred hymns chanted
in hope, and there's no answer
unknowable
the soul's pursuit hidden
by its own works:

the spirit's thirst, the strife
the restless silence, too much
unable to see
beyond the nose he says
he meditates
and sees visions of Buddha
weeping for us
the mirror swallowed
my footprints on the shore
I couldn't blame the waves
the geese kept flying over head
the shadows kept moving afar
the lane to temple
through foul drain, dust, and mud:
black back of Saturn
in a locked enclosure
a harassed devotee
seeking shelter
under the golden wings
of Angel Michael
a prayer away now
whispers the moon in cloud
not much fun—
cold night, asthmatic cough
and lonely Christmas:
no quiet place within
no fresh start for the New Year



NO MOIST SECRETS

(A Tanka Sequence)

Layers of dust thicken
on the mirror water makes
the smuts prominent:
I wipe and wipe and yet
the stains stay like sin
when I have no home
I seek refuge in the cage
of your heart and close
my eyes to see with your nipples
the tree that cared to save from sun
in the forest of your hair
my finger searches
the little pearl of blood
that stirs the hidden waters
and contains my restlessness
crazy these people
don't know how to go down
with the swirl and up
with the whirl but play
in the raging water
watching the waves
with him she makes an angle
in contemplation:
green weed and white foam break
on the beach with falling mood

they couldn't hide the moon
in water or boat but now
fish moonlight from sky:
I watch their wisdom and smile
why I lent my rod and bait
the lips in her eyes
and long hours in the mouth—
no moist secrets
between us to reveal:
now our backs to each other
all her predictions
could come true had I paid her
the fees for writing
psychic reflections on dreams
I failed to realize in life
wrinkles on the skin
remind me of time's passage
year by year travelled
long distances renewing
spirit and waving goodbye
feeling the difference
between a tin house and
a weather proof tent:
on the Yamuna's bank
Kumbh deluge to wash sins
with black and white marks

and nest of ants on its skin
the tree grows taller
shining through the geometry
of sun, moon and halogen
my voice
brown like autumn
crushed in noises I can't
understand days pass in colors
buried
a cloud-eagle
curves to the haze
in the west
skimming the sail
on soundless sea
heaven is
the frisson of union
with fishwife
behind the boulders
on sea beach
before the foamy
water could sting her vulva
a jellyfish passed
through the crotch making her shy —
the sea whispered a new song



PASSION

(A Tanka Sequence)

She gives him the push
when he says sex starving
is a greater sin
than fasting for his long life
or praying to the lingam
one more plateau
to negotiate between lapses in bed:
the moon shines bright and naked
I brave her cold lashes
after a tiff
lying under the same blanket
two of us stare
the peeping moon and turn
with glee to each other
shaped like a bird
a drop of water lands
on her breast:
my breath jumps to kiss it
before her pelvic flick
glowing with sweat
her muscles tighten up
and the toes curl
breathing gets heavier
trembling...twitching...ecstasy
weaving no web
a dark fishing spider
mates in the creek
and curls up hanging from the twat
in one-shot deal



MIDNIGHT SENSATIONS

(A Tanka Sequence)

I fear the demons
rising from my body
at midnight crowding
the mind and leading the soul
to deeper darkness
sleeps the night with
desires wrapped in blanket—
spring in the eyes
gods couldn't change the rhythm
of the body and its needs
estranged everyone
at home homeless wanderers
no nostalgia
effaced in empty space
all grope lonely pursuits
awake in dream time
he looks for the candle—
love's invitation
lighting up in the dark
and sings the body's song
coiled up inside
she lies a rejected shroud
and he mounts up
with mind between the thighs
multiplying pain at night
the night queen fragrance
seeps in through the window

coupled with full moon
adds to my delight though I'm
alone in my bed tonight
who cares for the smell
of sperms dried on my palm
when I detest
my own body's odour
oozing from the vest
the sleep is buried
in sex for diversion
yoga or prayers:
the dawn preserves bitter eyes
in the day's bleak passage
searching mosquitoes
that hide with my blood in their
swollen bellies and
make sleep desert my eyes
ever in need of peace
an insomniac
weak with desires and prayers
hears the heartbeats
rising fast with dark hours
survives one more nightmare



MOTHER

(A Tanka Sequence)

As I repose in
the wrinkles of her face
I feel her crimson
glow in my eyes her holy
scent inside a sea of peace
the room has her
presence every minute
I feel she speaks
in my deep
silently
is it her quietus
that she roars in herself
like a sea
waves upon waves
leaps upon herself

love is the efflux
from her body spreading
parabolic hue—
enlightens the self I merge
in her glowing presence
I clasp her hands
and feel the blood
running savagely
through her arteries
in tulip silence

her vacant eyes
reveal this city:
dim, humid, absent-minded
orchestrating bronchial noises
quakes in the face



POST-WAR

(A Haiku Sequence)

Night bombing
leaves the garden
white as death

vultures waiting
for the leftovers
of the sacrifice

whiteness of the moon
and rocks howl with the wind—
fear in the veins

in the ruins
searching her photo:
evening

in the diary
searching phone numbers of
friends now alive

standing behind
the window bars observes
darkness in shapes

watching
the darkness between the stars
enlightenment

awaits his son's
phone call from the border:
dogs and cats wail

a dead voice
calling up at dawn:
drowsy eyes

alone
on her bed rings
the cell phone

going alone
an empty shadow
in the mall

crowded streets
moving among the years
wretched faces

shell-shocked or frozen
he stands in tears on hilltop
craving nirvana

unmoved by the wind
he sits on a rock wearing
peace of the lake

hearing heaviness
of her footsteps passing
the closed door

withdrawn within
sensing infinity
an island

searching peace
in the dark blankness
of mind's silence

in silence
one with the divine will
growing within



LOVE-MAKING

(A Haiku Sequence)

Her sleeping desire
no dirty tantalizer:
we too together

bedside altar
smell of her hair:
dreams light up

her veil
hides the face
love too

lovemaking
he melts into her
time stands still

lovemaking
the sound of orgasm:
Lao'Tzu*

making love
she tastes the salt upon
his shoulder

candling in vein
leaves marks of teeth on her neck
utters holiness

making love
hands clasped and head hung
prayer in bed

unclothing
the white night:
lips meeting lips

writes with strands of
watery hair on her bare back
a love haiku

after the tumble
buried between the sheets
leftover passion

hidden between the sheets
my smothered sense—
salted honey

she departs
leaving behind her clothes
over mine

they come together
as themselves within themselves—
love's silence



* A great sound is inaudible, and a great image is formless,” said Lao Tzu.

SNAKES

(A Haiku Sequence)

Sunny morning:
a snake slides through the fence
looking for a prey

full of silt
the Ganga overflows:
snakes under the waves

raises its hood
a cobra in water:
algae criss-cross

a quick brush
with snake in the fence:
plucking flowers

searching reason
in the labyrinthine pattern:
snakes in courtyard

avoids searching
mushroom in the crowded green –
snake on the fence

searches thorn apples
to propitiate lingam:
snake in sanctum

dreaming her nude
the serpent rises:
first orgasm

a snake's tail
coils round a sweet
in the box

smells a snake
in the wet grass –
her smile

rises with tickles
between the thighs
the dream-serpent

a yellow snake
slithers on the grass –
dewy trail of love

climbing high through
rough pathway and stony cold
a green snake

a yellow snake
through the blooming balsams bed
a lone frog puffs up

a snake's dead skin
near the fence:
she stands unmoving



HIBISCUS

(A Haiku Sequence)

Red oleander and
hibiscus calling morning
to Kali

the lone hibiscus
waits for the sun to bloom:
morning's first offering

without washing hands
he touches the hibiscus for worship:
her frowning glance

love tickles
with erect pistil:
hibiscus

narrowly escape
the midair web of spider
perched on hibiscus

a tiny spider
on the hibiscus sucking
its golden hue

suspended
on the spider's web —
a hibiscus

after little rain
lilies smile with hibiscus —
the sun in May

hibiscus
over the mossy roof
deeply rooted

oleander and
hibiscus blaze with passion —
making love in sun



ALONE

(A Haiku Sequence)

Waiting for the train
alone on the platform
swatting mosquitoes

after the party
empty chairs in the lawn —
new moon and I

all guests gone:
after the late party
night and I

nothing changes
the night's ugliness
in the lone bed

alone
in a shrunken bed
aged love

in the well
studying her image
a woman

knitting silence
my wife on the bench
after lunch

virtual flirting
untamed straggly bushes—
dystopia

a moth
struggling for life
on wire

a lone sparrow
atop the naked branch
viewing sunset

between virgin curves
he deep-breathes evening mist
rests in the hollow

the lone mushroom —
a pregnant woman
stares out of the window

facing the sun
the lone flower
dying to bloom

a dead leaf hangs
by a spider's thread
invisible in sun

under a tree
in meditation sunken
a lone stone

alone
on the National Highway
Hanuman



DHANBAD

(A Haiku Sequence)

December dusk
fiery cleavage on roadside
breathless coalfield

blue black fumes
swirl around his head—
floating hand

wheezing his way
to Shiva's hilly abode
a young miner

smoggy mist—
filling each collier's house
with Yama's call

open cast mining
burning coal on the roadside
dying vultures

the wind hushed
a collier died
in the cage

tired pitman
carrying coal on bike—
only meal

driving
with burning eyes—
abandoned mine



MANGOES

(A Haiku Sequence)

Throwing stones
at unripe mangoes
two urchins

hidden
behind the mango tree
her half face

a little girl
jumps the fence
to pick a mango

hitching up the skirt
she fills her pockets with
unripe mangoes

picking mangoes
in the summer loneliness—
guard's greedy look

leaning sideways
she looks at mango pickle
caries ache

fallen mangoes
after the midnight storm—
morning drizzle

fingers grope
the leaking pulp
moist lips

her fingers
I taste in the mango
she peels

ripe mangoes
still hanging after the hail
wet backyard

last night's rum
still leaks this morning—
mango breakfast

noisy birds
don't let me sleep
fewer mangoes

falling mangoes—
smell the change in season
rotten backyard

half-eaten
fallen in the drain
the last mango



COAL CULTURE

(A Haiku Sequence)

Coal grows golden
each moment in quiet corners
raw wind sings

truant from spirit
in coal culture hollow mind
I turn dying ember

is there a release
from unloving life day by day
breathing heartless air

sounds turn fainter each day
with graying geometry of hope
I stand a rusted sign

there's something that sustains
us all in a world so perverse
it could be even worse

I've passed one more year
not knowing the song next year
goodbye is too real



TIDAL WAVE

A tidal wave
touches the shore to wipe
my naked footprints
and leaves behind some shells
pebbles and memories



YEARS END

So much reading
for six decades
now it's forgetting
before total silence
no revelation
only vacuity
and nothing comes
from blankness
to blankness years end

